

DC Interagency Council on Homelessness (ICH)

We convened a Round Table Meeting in advance of the ICH meeting on November 3rd, 2009. This forum was open to all members of the community, and it was intended to solicit input regarding key issues facing the ICH and those who are homeless in DC. This input was sought to inform the ICH planning process and committees. Participants were asked to reflect on the questions below and to offer their input through small group conversation and/or written comments. There were approximately twenty-eight participants in three groups. The following is a compilation of the discussions during the round table.

ICH Pre-Meeting Summary

Tuesday, November 3rd, 2009; 12:30-1:30 pm; Miriam's Kitchen

Topic: Downtown Services

1. The community has articulated a need for meals and services for individuals who are homeless in the downtown area. In the absence of a downtown service center, how can the community improve access to programs?
 - a. Additional information on local resources in the area.
 - b. Transportation for Medicaid recipients and more accessible vehicles for persons with disabilities including a dedicated van.
 - c. Business community involvement; business community could establish a fund to help move people off of the streets and for greater outreach.
 - d. Weekly bus pass or SmarTrip card.
 - e. Additional programs at CCNV.
 - f. More outreach services to give people food and information about how to get the services to end their homelessness. Generally, assistance with transportation is needed to access services and recovery programs.
 - g. Payment for volunteer work could be made through transportation assistance.
 - h. Co-locate and rotate services.
 - i. Correct the lack of shower facilities.
 - j. Those who are homeless must be good neighbors and protect programs such as Thrive DC.
 - k. Tie incentives to resources to yield ownership in recovery.
 - l. Put services where the consumers are and provide a place to go and to get connected.
2. What do you see as barriers to access to existing programs and services?
 - a. Paperwork.
 - b. Limited transportation; lack of funds for transportation.
 - c. Limited housing programs.
 - d. Lack of accessibility.
 - e. Lack of continuity between government and independent providers. This relationship needs to be established.
 - f. Staff.

- g. There is a need for additional shelter time in low barrier shelters.
 - h. Lack of drug outpatient treatment, mental health programs, and job training programs.
 - i. Some people have too many belongings so that there is no place to put what they own and their belongings are difficult to transport.
 - j. Shelters should be open 24 hours. Have a community room available as well as services and programs.
3. There is currently limited capacity for the Department of Human Services and its partners to provide shuttle transportation between programs and shelters. How realistic is it to seek solutions to this limited capacity situation by using public transportation for access to programs and services?
- a. Very realistic, as long as the solution is fair and continuous.
 - b. Who will be in charge of giving out the tokens?
 - c. Not realistic if the tokens are connected to a DC One Card.
 - d. Use Judiciary Square as a pick-up point.
 - e. Issue a weekly bus pass; establish a pass for those on Medicaid; put transportation assistance on EBT card with food stamp allocation.
 - f. Must discourage people from selling or trading transportation cards.

Topic: Shelter Intake

1. Currently, individuals who want to stay in the low barrier shelters must line up and then pass through a security check before being admitted. The security check at intake is important for the safety and well being of all who use and work in the shelters, but it can cause delays in intake at times. What can we do to improve intake at the shelters so that persons will not have to wait for a long time, especially in bad weather?
- a. Walk through scanner.
 - b. Staggered entry so that people who were there the night before are able to enter early.
 - c. Canopy in front of each facility.
 - d. Heated tent in the winter.
 - e. Lockers in front of the shelter or some secure checkroom arrangement for bags and belongings.
 - f. Eliminate security "warding."
 - g. Open earlier.
 - h. People line up because they are afraid that they will not get in.

Suggestions for future topics, questions:

- a. Timeframes for participants in the housing programs.
- b. Housing for veterans.
- c. Utilization of existing vacant building space (e.g., a closed public school).
- d. Establish a program in which volunteer participants are recruited to work on closed buildings to renovate them so that they are once again habitable.

- e. Improve information flow and postings in shelters regarding meetings and for other pertinent information.
- f. Need a facility for daytime storage of belongings so that people are able to look for and get work.

This concludes the summary of input from this session.